



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
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October 9, 2002

TO: Washington State Board of Health Members
FROM: Carl Osaki, WSBOH Member
RE: **SCHOOL INDOOR AIR QUALITY UPDATE**

Summary:

The Board heard testimony from parents, students and teachers concerned about indoor air quality (IAQ) in their schools at its March, May, June and September 2002 meetings. The Healthy Schools Task Force (HSTF), a group of non-governmental organizations and government agencies, was meeting from April to July 2002 to discuss school environmental health and safety issues. One of the HSTF goals was to recommend policies to improve school environmental health and safety.

Board Chair Linda Lake asked for a presentation of policy recommendations from the Healthy Schools Task Force when it completed its work. Chair Lake also asked Board staff to interview local health department and school district staff involved in responding to IAQ complaints at four schools experiencing problems. Board staff will present a summary of these interviews today. Please see attached "Survey of Four Local Health Department and School District Responses to School Indoor Air Quality Complaints".

In addition, the Board will hear from Marcia Riggers, OSPI Assistant Superintendent, Nancy Goodloe, Kittitas County Health Department Administrator, and Gary Jefferis, Director of Maintenance and Operations, Everett Public Schools and Compliance Chair for the Washington Association of Maintenance and Operations Administrators' Board of Directors. Ms. Goodloe and Mr. Jefferis will draw on their own experiences to recommend ways the Board can contribute to improving how the public health and education systems prevent and respond to school IAQ problems.

A document titled "Summary of Recommendations Regarding How to Improve the Public Health and School Systems' Responses to School IAQ Problems" is attached for discussion. These recommendations were compiled from the Healthy Schools Task Force report; testimony received by the Board from parents, teachers and students concerned about school IAQ; the Attorney General's school construction investigation; and the Environmental Law Institute's *Healthier Schools: A Review of State Policies for Improving Indoor Air Quality*.

Recommended Board Motion:

I recommend the Board adopt the following motion:

The Board appoint a workgroup of Board members to develop policy recommendations regarding school indoor air quality and present those recommendations to the Board in January 2003.

Background

The Board has authority to:

adopt rules controlling public health related to environmental conditions including but not limited to heating, lighting, ventilation, sanitary facilities, cleanliness and space in all types of public facilities including but not limited to food service establishments, schools, institutions, recreational facilities and transient accommodations and in places of work [RCW 43.20.050 (2) (c)].

The Board set minimal environmental standards for educational facilities in WAC 246-366. Local health officers review and approve new facility and major alteration plans, and make periodic inspections of each existing school within their jurisdictions (WAC 246-366-040). These rules were last revised in 1991 to include sound control standards.

In 1994, the Board adopted a motion on schools and school environments. This resulted in the Department of Health convening workgroups and producing several reports:

- School IAQ Best Management Practices Manual, February 1995
- Implementation Survey Report – WAC 246-366 Primary and Secondary Schools, February 12, 1997
- Health and Safety Guide for K-12 Schools in Washington, with OSPI, December 2000

School Indoor Air Quality has been a recurring topic during Board meetings over the last eight years. Most recently the Board heard testimony at its March, May, June and September 2002 meetings from parents, students and teachers concerned about IAQ at Cle Elum schools.

School IAQ problems are not limited to Cle Elem schools, however. Assessments of 156 Washington schools during the 2000-2001 school year found that 42.5 percent of classrooms had high carbon dioxide levels, indicating inadequate ventilation (see “School Indoor Air Quality Assessment and Program Implementation”).

This past legislative session, two bills that would have an effect on school IAQ were proposed. One was Senate Bill 6356, creating a Children’s Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council that would have been staffed by the Board. The other bill, Senate Concurrent Resolution 8426, would create a Joint Select Committee on Indoor Mold Contamination that would study the health effects of mold exposure and include school districts in its advisory groups. Both bills failed.

Legislation in other states:

Legislation passed in other states has established a Task Force on Indoor Air Quality, directed study of environmental conditions of portable classrooms, directed study of issues related to mold contamination in indoor environments, and enacted the Toxic Mold Protection Act, which directs the convening of a task force to examine standards for permissible exposure limits to mold and identification and remediation of mold.

Regulations in other states:

Inspection: Ohio and North Carolina, like Washington, require health departments to conduct regular inspections. New York, California, and Maine require schools to do school facility inspections. All five states require different levels of inspection. Some states require semi-annual or annual inspections, while Washington requires “periodic” inspections.

Training and Information: Texas, like Washington, requires their Department of Health to develop voluntary guidelines for IAQ in new and existing schools. Minnesota law requires the state to develop and disseminate a number of manuals and other informational resources to improve IAQ in new and existing schools, and Vermont law requires IAQ information and training programs for schools and the public.

Maintenance: Massachusetts and Maine have regulations that require specific funding levels for maintenance of school facilities. Maine, New York, and Florida require schools to have maintenance plans or policies. Other states have a health and safety program, mechanical system operating and maintenance requirements, HVAC and mold maintenance requirements, carpeting maintenance requirements, and restricted use of hazardous substances.

Funding: Alaska requires schools to have a maintenance plan to receive construction and repair funding, and Massachusetts requires a minimum level of maintenance spending in order to receive construction funding. Maine has established a state fund for school repairs and renovation. Minnesota funds schools for capital expenditures on health and safety projects, including IAQ.

Information access: New York laws and regulations provide for access to school facility information, and California law requires public dissemination of information regarding budgeting and planning for deferred maintenance projects. California and New Jersey labor regulations require employee access to school facility maintenance records.

Public involvement: New York and New Jersey require advance notice for school construction projects, New York also requires providing direct community participation in school IAQ issues through school health and safety committees.

Design and construction: Minnesota and West Virginia have specific ventilation requirements for new school construction.